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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM: American Embassy, Bonn Despatch No. 1817

TO: Department of State, Washington April 3, 1958

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH FRITZ CASPARI, BRITISH DESK OFFICER  
IN THE FOREIGN OFFICE, ABOUT CURRENT GERMAN AND FOREIGN  
OFFICE AFFAIRS

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In the course of a conversation at lunch today, Fritz Caspari, British desk officer in the Foreign Office, made the following strictly off-the-record comments:

1. The Chancellor was becoming more and more difficult. In spite of his continuing vigor, he is in fact an old man, full of prejudices, and completely unwilling to accept new ideas. He is rigid and inflexible in his approach. Anticipating difficulties with the Chancellor in formulating substantive positions for the London visit, April 16-18, Caspari has agreed with Ambassador von Herwarth that the latter should return to Bonn next week to assist.

2. Caspari did not understand why the Government decided to request Bundestag approval for the equipping of the Bundeswehr with atomic weapons at this time (last week's Bundestag debate). He thought this had been a mistake. He asked if this had been the result of American pressure. I said we had nothing to do with the Bundestag debate. He then said he thought this issue cut very deep, and was regarded as a decisive one by many Germans. Some of the scenes during the debate reminded him of debates which took place during the latter years of the Weimar Republic. He of course did not think the same consequences would follow. But there was real hate between many members in the Bundestag. He and many people he knows outside the Foreign Office were most unhappy that the Government had pressed this issue at this time.

*Chancellor*  
ENR

3. Caspari deplored the "blank check" which the Chancellor had given Pétain with respect to North Africa during last week's visit. The Foreign Office experts had not agreed with this, believing the Federal Republic can exert a useful influence on the French and has an independent role to play in North Africa and the Near East. Boeker, responsible for French affairs in the Foreign Office had been very

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much against unqualified support for the French. (Becker had also not wanted to have his Western European section moved under Carstens in the present Foreign Office reorganization. Carstens will be the director responsible for European and integration affairs, and Becker fears Carstens will tend to emphasize the importance of no disagreements with the French in the interest of European integration.)

4. Brentano had made decisions about the Foreign Office reorganization "to get things back into his own hands." Unfortunately, he did not consult some of his technical, administrative people beforehand. Foreign Office officials are now suffering as a result. The basic trouble is there are not enough budgeted posts to go around. For example, Knoke has been told he would go to Moscow as no. 2 man but not get the salary which goes with this position. Caspari may be transferred to London. But he cannot go until von Braun vacates the position. Von Braun cannot leave until Mehr departs for Switzerland. But the present Ambassador in Switzerland doesn't want to be rushed. This seems to be typical. Caspari asked von Marchtaler this morning if the latter would still be his boss next Tuesday, after the Easter holiday. Von Marchtaler did not know, and said he had been unable to find out. (This is reported merely to illustrate the current situation in the Foreign Office.)

For the Ambassador

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